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4/4/79

CN004A

ARGENTINA

1. Human Rights Conditions in January, 1977

Ten months after having carried out a military coup that removed President Isabel Peron from power, the Argentine Armed Forces were at the height of an anti-subversive campaign to put an end to urban and rural guerrilla movements. The campaign was conducted under a state of seige and the security forces of the police and the military ruthlessly pursued all suspected subversives, detained them clandestinely and abused them severely. Prisoners were subjected routinely to torture during interrogation and general abuse during detention. In January 1977, approximately 280 persons per month were being detained (both legally and otherwise) by the security forces and throughout the anti-subversive campaign an estimated 15,000 persons disappeared. Most were probably summarily executed. The Government eventually acknowledged the detention of over 3,000 persons. Many of these persons had no connection to subversive movements.

2. Major Human Rights Events Since January 1977

1. February , 1978

The Government published the first in a series of lists that purported to list all PEN detainees.

2. February-March 1978

There were reliable reports concerning the surfacing of mutilated bodies on beaches. None were subsequently identified, to our knowledge. Similar credible reports circulated in December.

3. April 17, 1978

Jacobo Timerman was transferred to house arrest where he still remains despite a July 20 Supreme Court finding that there were no grounds for his detention.

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S2000000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
Exemption(s):
☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny
Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full
☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to
Date _____ Reason _____
Declassify on _____

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4. May 7, 1978

A 3-page ad appeared in La Prensa consisting of a letter to Videla and the names of 2,592 disappeared persons. It was funded by the PAHR, the League on Human Rights, and the Ecumenical Movement. It symbolized the increase in activity by those groups and the increasing willingness of the press to address the issue either in this form or through reporting and editorials.

5. October 17, 1978

The Government announced that the IAHRC had been invited to Argentina. An earlier conditioned request made in June was rejected by the IAHRC.

6. December 1978

The Plaza de Mayo was closed to the Mothers as their regular meeting and demonstration site.

7. December 1978

Politically-inspired abduction and murder of Argentine career diplomat Elena Holmberg causes widespread shock and concern among influential circles who had previously ignored problem of disappearances.

8. December 25, 1978

A Christmas amnesty benefited 193 persons of whom we know 186 were actually released.

9. Early 1979

Preliminary evidence suggests a decrease in violations of category one rights with few reports of disappearances or torture having been received.

10. March 1979

The local ICRC representative stated that

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prison conditions had clearly improved and he expected further improvements both because of the IAHRRC visit and because government officials now seemed to want the improvements.

There was probably some quantitative improvement in 1978 with respect to 1977, but the qualitative aspect remained little changed with disappearances continuing at a high rate and torture and prisoner mistreatment common.

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